

# Current Developments



October 10, 2003

## From The State Conservationist - *Robert N. Jones*

We've just finished one fiscal year and a new one has begun. FY03 was a busy and a most challenging year. I want to say "thanks" to you for getting through a year that started with frustrations, but ended with accomplishments. Because of the delayed appropriations, NRCS employees were required to do a tremendous amount of work in the last six months of the fiscal year.

A major emphasis this year was implementing the programs and procedures of the 2002 Farm Bill. Dollar wise, Alabama fared very well this year. The funding for the Farm Bill conservation programs was in the neighborhood of \$18 million as compared to \$3 to \$4 million per year in the past. With the hard work and commitment of everyone involved, these funds were obligated, plus additional funds that were received late in the year. New programs such as the Grassland Reserve Program and the Farm and Ranch Protection Program were implemented in an excellent manner.

While the Farm Bill programs took the spotlight, there were tremendous accomplishments in

all programs. Watershed and EWP funds were contracted and obligated within extremely tight schedules. RC&D projects continued to be innovative and creative to address local concerns. Soil survey activities and new agreements with counties are on a fast track. Our "bread and butter" work with conservation districts and partners is always appreciated by our clients.

There were also job security issues to deal with in FY03. In Alabama, we looked at 14 positions to determine if these functions could be outsourced. In each case, it was determined that the government was the most effective way to deliver the services.

All in all, it's been a challenging and yet a very productive year. My heartfelt thanks go to each of you. FY04 will likely present other challenges. I am confident that together we can deal positively with those issues as well.

*Bob*

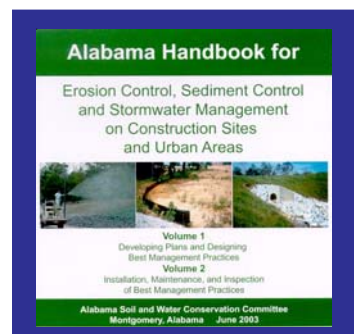
### Handbook Updated

by Perry Oakes, State Conservation Engineer, Auburn, AL

The Alabama Handbook for Erosion Control, Sediment Control, and Stormwater Management on Construction Sites and Urban Areas has been revised and is now a more user-friendly and comprehensive version of the July 2002 Handbook. The 2002 Handbook is identified as the primary technical reference in current Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) stormwater regulations.

Training for agency personnel in the state is scheduled for November 13<sup>th</sup> at the ADEM Hearing Room. Open training through Auburn University's T-Square continuing education program will be offered statewide

December 9-12 as Course 1. The major part of Course 1 will involve planning and designing systems that utilize the best management practices (BMPs) included in the June 2003 Handbook. Later during the year, Course 2 will be offered through the T-Square program with the major part involving the installation and maintenance of BMPs. Participants in each training session will receive a copy of the revised handbook. NRCS employees interested in attending the agency training should contact their respective ASTC (FO) or state office supervisor. The handbook is located online at: [http://www.swcc.state.al.us/erosion\\_handbook.htm](http://www.swcc.state.al.us/erosion_handbook.htm)



# ***NRCS Assisting Alabama American Indian Tribes***

## **Escambia County NRCS Staff Planning with Poarch Band of Creek Indians**

*by Bill Hughes, State Resource Con., Auburn, AL*

Detra Boutwell, Escambia County District Conservationist and David Elliott, Tribal Liaison and Soil Conservation Technician, worked closely with Farm Manager John Flowers and Chairman Eddie Tullis of the Poarch Band of the Creek Indians to develop a conservation plan on all lands managed by the tribe. The conservation plan includes pasture, hayland, forests, crops, wildlife, and a farmstead.

The first phase of implementation of the overall conservation plan will be partially financed through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and primarily focuses on the pastures and the restoration of some critically eroding mine land. The objectives of the EQIP portion of the plan are to improve forage utilization through rotational grazing management and to protect water quality in streams around the farm by installing and improving watering facilities for cattle. Another objective is to stabilize the critical areas left bare by recent gravel mining. The primary practice addressing this concern is the planting of longleaf pine, which will control the erosion and restoration of a declining habitat for wildlife.

According to Chairman Tullis, "I appreciate the developing relationship that we have established with

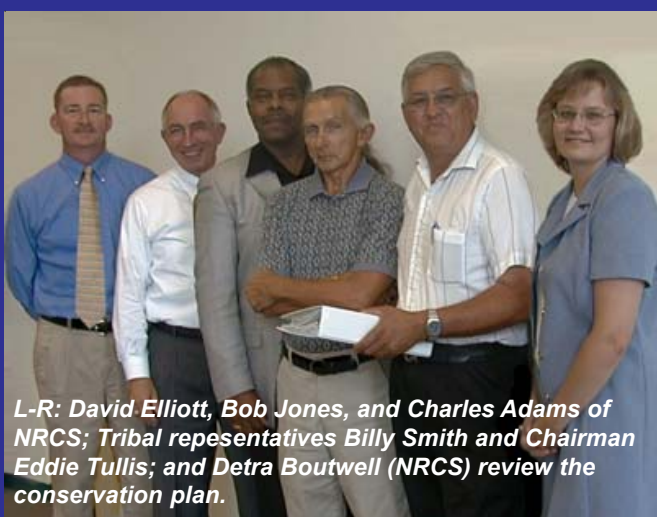
the Natural Resources Conservation Service. I am conscious of all the work that went into developing this plan. I want to keep the line of communication open." Other phases of the overall conservation plan will be implemented in the near future. Phase 2 will include the implementation of planned wildlife practices through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and forestry practices through the Alabama Agriculture Development and Conservation Commission program. The forest and wildlife lands will focus on restoration of longleaf and creating native plant species and wildlife that existed in the early history of the tribe. This native habitat and nature trails will be used for education of children and youth within the tribe and throughout the county.

Additional EQIP contracts are expected to implement soil conserving and soil quality improving practices on the tribal cropland. Chairman Tullis's commitment is summarized in his statement, "Poarch" means "Head of the River" and I would like to see conservation put into practice in the watershed surrounding the head of the Perdido River to restore valuable natural areas that contribute to water quality."

Like the Poarch Band of the Creek Indians, landowners in Escambia county are lucky to have this kind of enthusiastic, visionary and professional staff to help them inventory their natural resources, evaluate their alternatives and formulate conservation plans to develop and conserve their natural resources for future generations.

## **Information Meeting Held for Tribes**

American Indian tribes in Alabama had the opportunity to attend a USDA Information and Program Delivery Initiative Meeting in August in Montgomery. This was the first meeting of this nature and it was well attended with 36 participants representing seven of the nine tribes in Alabama. The success of the meeting was due to the working relationship between the American Indian Liaisons from Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, Alabama Indian Affairs Committee, and Natural



*L-R: David Elliott, Bob Jones, and Charles Adams of NRCS; Tribal representatives Billy Smith and Chairman Eddie Tullis; and Detra Boutwell (NRCS) review the conservation plan.*

Resources Conservation Service, as well as the support from the tribal leaders from across the state. The American Indian Liaison Committee in Alabama is making sure that the American Indians in Alabama are aware of how to access all USDA programs.

### NRCS Employees Members of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians as Summer Interns

Alabama was fortunate to have two members of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians working with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as summer interns. The summer intern program provided an opportunity for these young people to get hands-on experience with conservation activities.



**Nick McGhee**

**Nick McGhee** is a 16 year-old year old junior at Escambia County High School. Nick believes that he really learned a lot about conservation planning and the engineering practices associated with it. Nick feels that the skills he learned on this job will help him as he focuses on future working

goals in life. According to Detra Boutwell, District Conservationist in Escambia County, "Nick was directly responsible for two of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contracts that were signed in the county. Nick prepared the

packets and made the contacts with the landowners. Nick has made a contribution to the office this summer."



**Misty Rolin**

**Misty Rolin** is a 21 year-old tribal role member of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians in Atmore, Alabama. She was very glad to have the opportunity to work with NRCS. As a part of the staff,

she learned how the work of the NRCS office relates to conservation and how the staff interacts with the public to promote conservation activities.

Charles Adams, Regional Conservationist, recently visited the Poarch Reservation and met the summer interns. "We are grateful for the excellent working relationship that NRCS has with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. We all have something to contribute, and I appreciate the contributions that these students made this summer," said Adams.

### Heritage Seed Corn Presented to Poarch Creek Indians

NRCS Regional Conservationist Charles Adams and State Conservationist Bob Jones presented five pounds of "Trail of Tears" corn seed stock to Chairman Eddie Tullis of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center at Americus, Georgia, grew the corn. With the seed stock, the Center is attempting to help reintroduce this very rare and special crop to the descendants of the American Indians who once populated this area. Accepting the seed stock, Chairman Tullis said, "This is a special occasion for us. The Trail of Tears was a sad time for our people. We will plant this corn and use it as an educational opportunity to remind our children of our heritage. This corn will have a long-term impact."



***l-r: NRCS Regional Conservationist Charles Adams, NRCS Alabama State Conservationist Bob Jones, and Chairman Eddie Tullis, Poarch Creek Indian Tribe.***



## ***Bruno Tropeano -- Earth Team Volunteer***

***By Rod Goode, State Earth Team Coordinator***

Bruno Tropeano believes that if you join an organization, you should be more than a card-carrying member. You should participate in meetings and activities and offer suggestions and criticism as needed.

His first involvement with NRCS was through his need for guidance and direction in the location and sizing of a pond on his property. He had just purchased some land and was planning to build a home, but first wanted to establish a pond. Soon after that, Bruno was asked to become an advisor to the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), now he is a District Supervisor.

As a District Supervisor, his horizons and activities have expanded. Bruno, along with his wife, Joanne, are consistent volunteers with the annual Urban Forestry Fair and the Cahaba River Float. Their duties range from preparing the grounds to guiding students. It is not unusual to find both of them hauling hay or canoes, or handling mowers.

Bruno has volunteered on a number of projects. He designed and installed raised bed gardens at Washington Elementary School, helped administer land-judging competitions, constructed the overflow pipe for a pond at Tannehill State Park, built a pier and outdoor educational facilities at the park, and oversaw the installation of two dry hydrants. He distributed educational literature at the BJCC Boat Show and volunteered at Earth Day at the Gardens. He also assisted with the construction of Alabama's first phytoremediation site at Sloss Furnace,

supervised two cleanups of the Cahaba River, and repaired outdoor facilities for children at Central Park Elementary School.

During his tenure as a District Supervisor, Bruno was appointed as the District's voting member to the Cawaco RC&D Council. There, along with the efforts of many others, he has expanded his attempts to maintain the natural beauty of Alabama while encouraging economic development.

Why do all this? Having moved to Alabama from New Jersey and having seen the demise of many open spaces, he is resolved to help maintain more open spaces for both the current and future generations. His own lands were recently certified as an Alabama TREASURE Forest, where he strives to continually improve the property and deter development from encroaching. "There is considerably more pleasure in seeing deer and turkey on your property, than seeing a bank account balance", says Bruno. "And besides," he continued, "anyone can generate an account balance if they work hard. No one can re-establish open lands once they are built upon or destroyed."

So if you serve anywhere with Bruno, be prepared. It is highly unusual for Bruno to be absent from a meeting or activity. And it is more unusual to not hear from him at one of those meetings offering a suggestion or questioning a practice. But that only follows his philosophy to fully participate or vacate the position.



***Volunteers are important to the success conservation education events like the Cahaba River Float***

**T**he 2nd Annual National Conference on Grazing Lands will be held at the Nashville Convention Center on December 7-10, 2003, in Nashville Tennessee. This conference is designed to provide a forum for discussion of the benefits of grazing. Field staff should encourage landowners to attend this important conference.



# Looking Outside the Box for Assistance

by Paul Kennedy, Coordinator, Cawaco RC&D Council, Birmingham, AL



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For 35 years, AmeriCorps\*VISTA has been helping bring communities and individuals out of poverty. Today, nearly 6,000 AmeriCorps\*VISTA members serve in hundreds of nonprofit organizations and public agencies throughout the country — working to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses, increase housing opportunities, or bridge the digital divide.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts, USDA-NRCS Project Offices, and RC&D Councils all have a great opportunity to take advantage of this program for the benefit of the volunteer, the community, and to expand their abilities.

Your office can be a site host for a VISTA. The application is rather long, but not impossible. For your efforts you get a dedicated, highly motivated individual to help in your program delivery. A VISTA works about 32 hours per week. While some applications require a financial match, in some instances the match can be in-kind or waived by the state coordinator. We have been able to raise the required match locally for our VISTAs. A VISTA's "tour of duty" is 12 months. After that period, that individual can renew for another twelve months with approval from the state coordinator. In some instances, they can even go a third year. The site host has two options in filling a VISTA position. Option one is to go to the program with a candidate and get the position approved. Option two is to allow VISTA to post nationally and recruit someone interested in your area and your VISTA project.

At Cawaco RC&D, we have had three VISTA positions open at one time. One was for a small grant (<\$5,000) writer. We were never able to find the right candidate for that slot and vacated the position. One was for an Urban Gardening Coordinator. We have had several VISTAs in that position with good success. The third slot we got approval for was Community Improvement. That position eventually became the Landscape Design program the Council continues to run. Having had a VISTA in the position allowed us to find and develop more permanent

support and to develop certain skills in our staff.

For the VISTA, it is important that their position be challenging, rewarding, and well supported by the office/staff. A VISTA continues to receive training from the Corporation for National Community Service (CNS) about the VISTA program, and has an allocation for more directed training, but it is the assigned office mentoring, support, and on-the-job training that helps a VISTA grow in their position.

Currently, we are working with a national program coordinated by the Office of Surface Mining. We have recruited a VISTA candidate and are applying to be a site host for an Acid Mine Drainage/Watershed Outreach VISTA. That person will help us focus on and include acid mine drainage identification, education, remediation planning, and implementation into our ongoing watershed activities. We had to raise \$3,000, but in return we will get a VISTA that will devote nearly full-time efforts for one to two years in our watershed efforts.

Who is a VISTA? We have had younger and older folks. A good prospect is a recent graduate from college wanting to get into a specific field or someone that wants to change careers but lacks experience in their desired field. Remember that you scope the position, so you can target certain types of degreed graduates. VISTAs are not secretaries. They are not for administrative assistance. They are there to do project work. Why recent graduates? One reason is the educational award they earn if they complete 12 months of satisfactory service. It is currently about \$4,300. That award can be used to pay on student loans or pay toward future tuition. A VISTA is not "paid" but they do receive a living allowance or stipend, may qualify for childcare and health benefits, and a one time moving allowance.

This is just one of a host of programs and opportunities you can plug in to for the betterment of your programs. VISTAs leave behind lasting solutions to some of the toughest problems. For more info, visit the VISTA website at: <http://www.americorps.org/vista/>

## News from MO-15

### Alabama Soil Survey Sets an Example

Aaron Achen, MLRA Editor, informs us that the Soil Survey Publications Quality Improvement Team has chosen the Soil Survey of Pickens County to use as an example of the new standard “corporate look and feel” for soil surveys on CD. If the recommendations of the team are implemented, this CD will be sent to every state as a template for layout and design. Good job, Aaron!

### Just a Few Thoughts from NARSSO

We just put in another new SCAN site at Allen Bragg’s Farm in Madison County. This is a high visibility site for farmers because it is located beside the entrance to the Madison County Farmers Co-op. This is a fully automated system like the other SCAN sites. The good thing about this site is that the data is available in convenient form on the AAMU ALMNET web site. This web site has easy to read graphs and tables. One new feature added to the AAMU website is the DD60 calculation. AAMU has added the DD60 feature which automatically calculates Degree Days above 60 degrees Fahrenheit from air temperature data for cotton producers. This feature is in development and we are experiencing some challenges, particularly when the site fails to collect daily data. We hope to have a fix for this soon. You can find the DD60 data by going to any ALMNet SCAN site, clicking on “archive”, then click on the red button for “Daily Numeric Data”. You should see DD60 for each day, the cumulative for the month, and whether any daily data is missing. Another new feature is the addition of the soil description and digital color photo of the soil pedon at some sites. We are in the process of adding these. This feature is currently available on all three sites we recently installed in South Central Tennessee. We hope to have this at all eleven sites soon. Soil samples from each of the eleven sites have been sent to our National Soil Survey Lab in Lincoln, Nebraska. This data will allow us to properly classify each soil and provide data for NASIS and tool kit. Check out the ALMNet web site at: <http://wx.aamu.edu/ALMNet.html>

### Student Trainee Summer Experience at Alabama Soil Survey Project Office

*by Amanda Zelasko, Soil Scientist Student Trainee, Alexander City, AL*

Working at the Soil Survey office in Alexander City this summer has been a wonderful experience. I have enjoyed working with everyone, and will never forget the friends I have made. My experiences have left me more excited than ever to pursue a career in soil science.

Through the summer trainee program, I learned a lot about soil science and Alabama in general. I discovered that the most beautiful part of Alabama is not the remarkable landscape, but simply the kind-hearted people that inhabit it. I will never forget the memories of this summer including my first encounter with both mica and a very large rattlesnake. My favorite memories include a visit to Crenshaw County, traveling the countryside with Milton Tuck, eating lunch at Horseshoe Bend Military Park, and soil mapping in the Piedmont. I am taking home lots of memories as well as an abundance of useful knowledge that will give me a head start in my classes this semester.

As the summer draws to a close, however, I am looking forward to starting classes again at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. I wish to thank everyone that helped make my summer wonderful and wish you all best of luck in your future endeavors. Hopefully, I will be able to return to Alabama in the future to continue my learning experiences. Again, thanks. Amanda



*Summer interns make significant contributions to help meet our agency goals. (NRCS photo)*

Footnote: We want to wish Amanda the best as she returns to her studies at Southern Illinois University and we look forward to her return next summer. (Charles Love, State Soil Scientist)



## RC&D News

### Coosa Valley RC&D

Coosa Valley RC&D is continuing to help communities in our area. The projects included assisting:

- the Chambers County Vocational & Technical School Greenhouse project. Contributed funds to purchase equipment for the greenhouse and for materials for students in horticulture study.
- the Cleburne County 4-H Forestry Judging Team participated in the District and State 4-H Forestry Competition in Columbiana. Teams from Alabama have won the National 4-H Forestry Judging title ten times over the past several years. The Cleburne County Wildlife Judging Team participated in the State Wildlife Judging Competition in Auburn. 4-Her's from Alabama have won the National Wildlife Contest more times than any other state.
- the Pell City Parks and Recreation Department to help refurbish boat piers and moors. This was a joint effort with St. Clair County SWCD and Pell City Parks and Recreation Department.



*Coosa Valley RC&D helps fund pier refurbishing project.*



*Coosa Valley RC&D helps with senior prescription program in Clay County.*

- the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission implement the Senior Prescription Program. The program will operate from an office in Clay County which is being provided by the Clay County Commission. The funds will be used to pay a part-time employee to oversee the project. Coosa Valley RC&D has already provided help to purchase a computer and software. They have also provided a telephone, file cabinet, and senior Prescription Program brochures.
- the Graham Community replace a dilapidated roof with a metal one on the Graham Voting House. This renovation gave local citizens a more comfortable and dry place to vote. This grant was received as a joint effort by the Randolph County SWCD and the Randolph County Commission.

## *From The Field*

### Greetings From Iraq--Lawrence McGhee

Hope things in Auburn are well. We just recently learned that the Department of the Army will be extending guards and reserves for up to another six months in the country. I look forward to getting back as soon as possible. Tell everyone I said hello and thanks for their continued prayers and thoughts.

### City of Atmore Signs a Cooperative Agreement with NRCS

The City of Atmore and NRCS signed a cooperative agreement to help remedy the flooding in the Pine Barren Creek Watershed. According to NRCS Economist Gary Jones, "Between 75 and 100 families have been identified as having damage from flooding along Pine Barren Creek. Many of these residents are low income, minority, or elderly citizens who need outside assistance."

Over \$1 million was appropriated through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-566) to reimburse the city for expenses incurred to study alternatives and implement solutions to the problem. The area of the watershed affected by the flooding includes approximately 1,500 acres of urban and built-up area in the City of Atmore. NRCS Program Manager Mason Dollar, stresses, "It is important for residents to

understand that no course of action has been determined at this time. The study will likely indicate that a combination of engineering practices should be installed to remedy the problem."

The City of Atmore will coordinate the study to identify the cause of flooding problems and implement approved solutions. NRCS will provide project supervision to ensure program compliance and technical assistance. The project should be completed in September 2005.

### Landowners Meeting Held in Winston County

Staff from the Hamilton County NRCS, Winston SWCD, and Northwest RC&D joined other agencies in holding a one-day landowners meeting in Double Springs in August. The meeting was attended by more than 80 people from Winston, Lawrence, and Cullman Counties.

At the first meeting of this kind to be held in Winston County, USDA and state agricultural and forestry agencies, and representatives for consulting foresters and agricultural lenders explained the roles of their agencies or business and the services offered to rural landowners. The agencies also hosted displays to highlight their activities.

The event was sponsored by the Winston County Forestry Planning Committee and the Winston County TREASURE Forest Association.

## **Farm Bill Progress**

State Conservationist Bob Jones and Katherine Pentecost of Farmland Trust sign a contract for land that will be a part of the Farm and Ranchland Reserve Program (FRPP). Alabama received six proposals for FRPP requesting funds of \$1,715,468 for a total of 1,501 acres of land to be protected. To date, five of these proposals have been funded obligating \$1,188,068 of FRPP funds covering 622 acres. We expect even more applications this next year as awareness of the program grows.





## News From Around Alabama

### Southeast Regional Conference of NACD

Alabama hosted the Southeast Regional Conference of the NACD at Point Clear, June 29-July 1. A highlight of the meeting was the first annual Southeast Region Conservation Hall of Fame presentations. The southeast regional conservation partnership established the Hall of Fame to encourage the growth and practice of conservation ethics as a legacy for the states within the region. Inductees for 2003 were Hugh Hammond Bennett (deceased), North Carolina; Jim L. Gillis, Jr., Georgia; A. D. Holmes, Jr., (deceased), Alabama; J. F. Williams (deceased), Alabama; and Charles "Pink" Francis (deceased), North Carolina.

### Partnership with Alabama Power Company

Alabama NRCS is cooperating with the Alabama Power Company (APC) to develop a booklet for property owners, potential buyers, and others stressing the importance of preventing shoreline erosion, careful use of chemicals, and the benefits of keeping native trees and shrubs along the shoreline. In producing the booklet, APC is drawing upon the expertise of NRCS specialists to help provide the material.

### Progressive Farmer Builds House of Ideas

The Progressive Farmer Idea House is a reality! The grand opening was September 12. Progressive Farmer came up with the idea to build a mini farmstead to illustrate the concepts of country



*A view from the Progressive Farmer Idea House includes a few acres of pasture, a pond, and out buildings.*

living, even on a small piece of land. Eight acres of rolling pasture overlooking a pond in Blount County was selected as the location for the first Idea House.

In addition to the spacious country home, there is a stable, a shop, and pasture land. The farmstead showcases ideas and tips that can be used to make the most of life in the country, no matter what the size of the homestead. NRCS Blount County DC Murray Griffin worked with Progressive Farmer to develop a conservation plan for the property and provided technical assistance. An article in the September issue of *Progressive Farmer* featured the importance of conservation planning and quotes Murray and State Resource Conservationist Bill Hughes-- <http://www.progressivefarmer.com/farmer/magazine/article/0,14730,478047,00.html>

Dan Miller, Progressive Farmer Editor, coordinated the construction of the Idea House. After working with NRCS, he responded, "I will always include a conservation segment as a part of future Idea House projects."

The homestead will be open for public tours on weekends until November 16. More information about the Idea House is available on the Progressive Farmer website: <http://www.progressivefarmer.com/farmer/house/index.html>

NRCS is exhibiting Backyard Conservation materials at the homestead. We are taking advantage of one more opportunity to promote NRCS programs.



*This home, situated on a few acres of land, will provide the landowner the joys and challenges of country living.*

# From the Civil Rights Advisory Committee -- Hispanic Heritage Month



By: Carolyn King, Hispanic Special Emphasis Program Manager.

*Developing ethnic literacy fosters pride in one's own culture and a respect and appreciation for the uniqueness of others.*

Most of you are aware that September 15<sup>th</sup> – October 15<sup>th</sup> is designated Hispanic Heritage Month. September 16<sup>th</sup> is “Mexican Independence Day” when Mexicans all over the world celebrate the beginning of Mexico’s independence from Spanish rule.

In 1492 Christopher Columbus discovered America. In 1521 about 50 Spanish soldiers arrived in Mexico and fought against the ruling Aztec Empire. The Spaniards won. For the next three centuries, they ruled the new colony named New Spain. There were 20 million Indians before the Conquest; after just one century of Spanish rule there were only about one million. All the other inhabitants were of mixed blood with the Spaniards.

In 1810 the Mexicans planned to start a war of independence against the Spanish on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, but their plans were discovered. They had to abandon their plans or start earlier. They chose to start earlier. On September 16<sup>th</sup> the war began and lasted 10 years.

The Webster’s dictionary defines Hispanic as “of or relating to the people, culture or speech of Spain.” Today the U.S. Census Bureau defines Hispanic Americans according to the parts of the world that they or their ancestors came from, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spain, or the nations of Central or South America. Today, there are more than 37 million people in the United States of Hispanic origin. That’s about 10 percent of us!

We are a unique blend of the customs, beliefs, and traditions of our native people and those introduced by the Spaniards. This is evident in the food, music, language and traditions that comprise our cultures.

Here is a recipe I hope you will enjoy as a part of this celebration.

## Fajitas

1½ lbs. beef skirt steak, cut into strips  
6 garlic cloves, chopped  
juice of 1 lime  
large pinch of mild chili powder, paprika, and cumin  
1-2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
12 flour tortillas

vegetable oil (for frying)  
salt and pepper to taste

Combine beef with ½ the garlic cloves, ½ the lime juice, chili powder, paprika, and olive oil. Add salt and pepper. Mix well and marinate for at least 30 minutes at room temperature or overnight, sealed and refrigerated.

Cut meat into bite size strips and grill in 1 Tbsp oil, rest of garlic, and lime in large skillet over high to medium heat until brown and cooked through. Serve with Pico de gallo, sour cream, guacamole, and cheese.

Optional: You may want to add onions and bell peppers to meat while cooking. Different colored bell peppers add a festive look and great taste.

For those of you who are adventurous, below is a recipe for tortillas.

## Flour Tortillas

2 cups un-sifted bread flour  
3 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
¼ cup lard, chilled  
¾ cup warm water

Mix the flour, salt, and baking powder in a bowl. Add the lard and mix in with your fingers until you have completely crumbled it in. Slowly add the warm water and mix with a large spoon. Put the ball on a “floured” board and knead 3-5 minutes until elastic. Store in a warm place inside an oiled, plastic bag for one hour. Pinch off pieces of dough about the size of a golf ball (1 inch) and let rest 15 minutes. Roll the balls into flat circles approximately 7 inches in size. Cook in the oven at 450-degrees, turning only once. Remove to a basket lined with a cloth towel or put between paper towels to cool. After the tortillas have cooled completely, store in a plastic bag. Yield: 9-10 tortillas.



## Personnel

### Accessions

Cortez Brundage, Data Transcriber, MLRA, Auburn, AL  
(Term Appointment)

### Promotions

Evelyn Bostick, Human Resources Assistant, Auburn, AL  
Jamie Carpenter, Soil Conservationist, Moulton, AL  
Steven Cleland, Soil Conservationist, Florence, AL to District  
Conservationist, NRCS, Blakely, GA  
Richard Collier, District Conservationist, Evergreen, AL to  
Wiregrass RC&D Coordinator, Ozark, AL  
Eddie Davis, Soil Scientist, Huntsville, AL  
Jason Gardner, Soil Conservationist, Cullman, AL  
Bill Hughes, Resource Conservationist, Auburn, AL to State  
Resource Conservationist, Auburn, AL  
Reuben Hyde, Soil Conservation Technician, Monroeville, AL  
Eddie Jolley, District Conservationist, Opelika, AL to  
Conservation Agronomist, Auburn, AL  
Chris Rice, Soil Conservation Technician, Scottsboro, AL  
Dana Sullivan, Soil Conservationist, Russellville, AL to Soil  
Scientist, Agriculture Research Service, Tifton, GA  
Angela Warden, Soil Scientist, Luverne, AL

### Reassignments

Tom Hughes, Assistant State Conservationist, North Team  
Office, Decatur, AL to Assistant State Conservationist,  
Auburn, AL  
Joey Koptis, Soil Scientist, Alexander City, AL to Soil Scientist,  
Jackson, AL  
Teresa Stewart, Northwest RC&D Coordinator, Tuscumbia, AL  
to Natural Resource Specialist, NRCS, Gainesville, FL

### Retirements

Jerry Johnson, State Forester, Auburn, AL

## Conservation for New Employees

Twenty-two NRCS employees participated in Phase I of the Conservation for New Employees course held September 29-October 3. Since the course has not been offered for a number of years, the working experience of the participants ranged from a few years to only a few months. The time of year and the location couldn't have been better. The cooler fall days made the field exercises very enjoyable. The retreat facilities of John and Carol Dorrill of Clay Hill Farms near Troy were ideal for the classroom functions. The training included elements and principles of the planning process, the tools used in the planning, application of conservation practices, and the principles and practices of each technical discipline. Phase II is scheduled for November 3-7 and Phase II will be December 8-12.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
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